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Summ

THE FUTURE OF AFRICA

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THE FUTURE OF AFRICA.

H. K. W. Kumm, Ph. D., F. R. G. S.

The World's Foreign Missionary Conference at Edinburgh (1910), when dealing with the unreached parts of the world, considered first the lands of Central African, Ironstone Plateau, the largest inhabited part of our earth without a Christian Missionary. This region of the World has also the distinction of being one of the two strategic centers for the work of Christian missions among non-Christian peoples. European civilization permeating the East has produced in those most populous heathen countries a state of affairs which is called by missionaries "The Problem of the Rising East," and by politicians "The Yellow Peril." The same civilizing influence is at work in Africa and though the African problem arising from this cause may not show the magnitude of the Eastern problem, seeing that the population of Africa is only one-fifth of that of China, India and Japan, yet the area covered is twice that of the aforementioned countries. Added to this, we have in Central Africa a phenomenon unique in the world—the sudden and unexpected advance of Islam throughout the Continent.

The Edinburgh Conference said, "The absorption of native races into Islam is proceeding rapidly and continuously in practically all parts of the continent."

The Chairman of Commission One concluded his address at that conference by saying, "The very first thing that requires to be done, if Africa is to be won for Christ, is to carry a strong missionary force right across the center of Africa to bar the advance of the Moslem."

Among the findings of the Lucknow Conference (India) of 1912, we read: "Concerted action among missionary boards and organizations is necessary in order thoroughly to co-ordinate the forces now at work in Africa and to regulate their distribution in such manner as to provide a strong chain of Mission Stations across Africa, the strongest link of which shall be at those points where Moslem advance is most active."

Missionary leaders of the United States of America express themselves on this question in the following terms:

"The principle of **urgency** should, as a rule, have the right of way; that is, if there is an opportunity to reach a people or section today, which in all probability will soon be gone, the church should enter the door at once, for example, if there is danger that the field may be pre-occupied by other religions or by influences adverse to Christianity. Equatorial Africa in a most striking degree is just now such a battle ground. It is plain to every observer that, unless Christianity extends its ministry to the tribes throughout this part of Africa, the ground will, in a short time, be occupied by Mohammedanism."—John R. Mott.

"Unless the church awakes to **the peril of Islam** she may once more be defeated in Africa. The spread of Islam in Africa is one of the most striking phenomena of the Nineteenth Century."—Rev. S. M. Zwemer, D. D.

"How can the American churches deal practically with the Mohammedan advance, especially in Africa? ~~The importance, especially in Africa?~~ The importance and greatness of this question to the Christian church in America cannot be overestimated. It represents **the largest World Missionary**

problem confronting the whole church, at the beginning of the Twentieth Century. As to Africa, because of the vastness and aggressiveness of the Moslem forces on that Continent, by common consent, the most immediate and insistent duty of the church of Christ is to give the Gospel to its barbaric millions, thus saving them from the Moslem faith and the Continent for Christ.'—Bishop J. C. Hartzell.

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The Bishop of Canterbury, in a letter written two years ago, as the result of an interview, expresses himself in the following words: "I have no hesitation in saying that I share the honest hope that this Centenary of Dr. Livingstone's birth may be widely used as an occasion of stimulating a public sense of our responsibility for bringing Christian truth to the knowledge of the heathen populations of Africa, and especially, Central Africa."

In another letter sent by **the Archbishop of Dublin** to the writer, the Archbishop says: "I most fully recognize the pressing necessity at the present juncture, that the Church of Christ in all its branches should make every effort within its power to bring His Gospel to the knowledge of the pagan tribes of Central Africa, which as yet have been unreached. I am well aware of the great and persistent efforts that are being made by the Moslems to anticipate the work of Christian Missions and to gain over these tribes of Islam. And, therefore, I believe, that there is a clear call to all who love the Lord Jesus Christ and desire to do His will, to use every available means to win these pagan tribes for Him before they are swept into the Moslem net and thus rendered much more inaccessible to the Christian missionary."

The late Dr. Gustav Warneck, the leading missionary authority of Germany, wrote five years ago:

“There is no difference of opinion that Christian missions dare not halt on the borders of the Moham-
medan world, yet the crucial question at present is
—Where are Christian missions most seriously
threatened by Islam. There can be no doubt about
the answer—In Central Africa; perhaps also in the
Dutch East Indies. If we do not counteract the ad-
vance of Islam with all our energy and along the
whole line, **we shall lose not only large parts of now
pagan Africa, but even territories already Christian-
ized.**”

Not only have the great Missionary Conferences
of the last few years and the leading men of var-
ious denominations and missionary leaders pointed
to Central Africa as a mission field that requires
to be faced immediately, but from every part of the
mission field voices are raised to call attention to
the advance of Mohammedanism in the Dark Conti-
nent.

The Bishop of Rangoon wrote in reply to a
question for the Edinburgh Conference: “**First in
urgency** are the races at present animistic but
threatened by Islam in Africa.”

“The most urgent of all mission problems,”
says Missionary Landgrebe, of Sumatra, “are the
countries threatened by Islam in Africa.”

Dr. Holland of Baluchistan, gives this testi-
mony: “Africa should first receive concentrated at-
tention, because if pagan Africa once embraces Is-
lam, then the work of converting them to Christian-
ity will be much more difficult and slow. Once
Africa is under the sway of Islam, the days of spiri-
tual harvest such as have taken place in Uganda will
be forever over. Africa, in my opinion, offers the
most urgent call at the present time.”

A few years ago Canon Sell of Madras wrote:

“There are times when it is very difficult to balance the competing claims of various parts of the mission field. I see no difficulty now Certain parts of Africa form now, in military language, the objective, and are the strategical positions of the great mission field. Parts of Africa in which the Moslem advance is imminent have for the present a pre-eminent claim.”

When fifteen years ago the writer first began to draw the attention of people to this threatened advance of the religion of Mohammed but the first faint signs of its progress had appeared. Today, it is watched intently by Government men, business men and missionary organizations. The French Government is fully alive to the serious problems which may arise should it continue unchecked. The Colonial Conference in Germany and the Colonial Office there are studying it, and the president of the Oriental Seminary in Berlin, in his anniversary address, pointed to the advance of Mohammedanism in the German colonies of Africa as threatening danger, and closed his address with the words, “**Videant consules.**”

In vain the religion of the Crescent attempted the conquest of the two northern continents of the Old World. To the very heart of Europe,—to Tours and Poitiers and Vienna, the warriors of Mohammed pressed their attack; and Gibbon is right when he says that it was “touch and go” and the Koran would have been the text book in Oxford and Cambridge.

Under the fierce strokes of Charles Martel (The Hammer) and John Sobiesky, the Moorish and Turkish armies were driven back and soon little will probably be left of Mohammedanism in Europe but the names of Gibraltar and the Alhambra and the

mournful memories gathering round the tombs of the Turkish Sultans at Adrianople.

In Asia, too, Islam has come to a stand-still, but Africa seems now to be falling its prey. North Africa once Christian, had in the time of Constantine eight hundred Bishoprics. The names of men like Clement, Origen, Athanasius, Cyril of Alexandria, Tertullian, Cyprian of Carthage and Augustine of Hippo, are among the greatest in our church history and all were north Africans. In the Providence of God enlightened North Africa had been given a task—the task of making and remodeling the future of the dark-skinned children of Ethiopia. What a great trust, and what an abject failure lies here before us!

The North Africa church is guilty—firstly, of spending her time and energy in fruitless theological discussions; secondly, of that which grew out of them—war; and thirdly, of disobedience to the last command of Jesus Christ to spread the Gospel. For 500 years North Africa was Christian, nominally Christian, and then came the reckoning—

“Weighed in the balances and found wanting!”

The scourge of Islam, the besom of relentless religious war, swept out of existence cities, cathedrals, libraries, colleges, and nine-tenths of the population, and for 1000 years North Africa became comatose, drugged by blood and fire; while slowly, but surely, the sands of the Sahara Desert encroached upon the once fruitful plains of the Cyrenaika, of Barka and of Mauretania. The palaces lay in ruins; the great Alexandria library had gone up in flames; the churches had crumbled to dust; the leaders of the nations were dead or had fled; the women had been carried off as slaves; and the re-

maining rabble, despised by their conquerors, feebly echoed the "Allahu Akbar!" (God is greater.)

The nominally Christian peoples of North Africa went through the mill of God. They were ground to dust, the hurricane of the East blew upon them, and the history of Christianity and civilization knew them **no more**.

At the time of the Norman Conquest of England a Moslem army traversed the Sahara, founding the desert city of Timbuctoo, on the banks of the Niger, in the Western Sudan. A hundred years later the followers of the Crescent occupied Nubia, the ancient kingdom of Queen Candace, and in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries great Moslem sultanates were established on the northern slopes of the Central African ironstone plateau, south of Sahara; such sultanates as Gao, Mossi, Diara and Massina in the West. Out of these grew the more recent ones of Bornu (larger than New York,) Gando (Wisconsin,) Kordofan (Missouri,) Bagirmi (a little smaller than Ohio,) Kanem (Kentucky,) Wadai (Montana,) Adamawa (Nevada,) Darfur (than the combined areas of Colorado, Kansas and Oklahoma.)

In none of these States is there a Christian missionary. "It is almost as if the United States had one missionary in Maine, one in Texas and not a ray of Gospel light between," Prof. W. S. Naylor, in his "Daybreak in the Dark Continent."

South of these sultanates, across the center of Africa, runs a chain of mountains and swamps; the Murchison Range in Northern Nigeria, Mount Alantik in the hinterland of the Kameruns, the swamps of the Logone and Middle Shari in the Shari-Chad Protectorate, the watershed between the Shari, Congo and the Nile, the Nuba Hill country, the

Sudd region (the greatest swamp on earth on the upper Nile,) and so on to Abyssinia. These mountains and swamps were inhabited by exceedingly warlike tribes. In vain the Mohammedans attempted their conquest. In a war of hundreds of years the tribes, favored by natural strongholds, maintained their independence and their fetish worship. They built walls on the principle of the Chinese wall on the north side of their mountain fastnesses, and at the point of their poisoned spears and arrows held the Mohammedan invaders at bay. Down the East Coast of Africa, and thus into the interior towards the great lakes, and as far south as the gold region of Sofala, Mohammedan traders and slave-dealers were able to spread their influence by a steady advance; but the main barrier along the Central African ironstone plateau remained unbroken.

That barrier has now been removed. The European occupation of these regions within the last seventeen years has put an end to the war of centuries. High roads have been built from the Nile to the Congo and from the Congo to the Shari. The White man's steamers run on all the great Central African rivers. The slave-raiding propensities of the Mohammedan trader have been checked, and the independent pagan tribes are not allowed to slaughter the Mohammedan traders (venturing into their domains) as they did a few years ago.

The Central African negro, while in many cases physically a magnificent specimen of humanity, is in mind but a child. A child quickly forgets, and the negro pagan's hatred of his hereditary enemy is disappearing. A child naturally looks up to those who are strong in mind and body, and him whom the child looks up to, the child imitates. Thousands

of Mohammedan traders—Arabs, Hausas, Nubians, Somalis—are using the white man's roads as their trade routes, and every Mohammedan trader is a Mohammedan missionary.

The impact of the religious influence of these great Central African Sultanates restrained for centuries by natural barriers, mountain swamps and dense forests but now surmounted by arteries of trade and traffic upon the pagan tribes of Central Africa is so powerful and continuous that certain authorities on African beliefs and problems, such as E. D. Morel, of "Red Rubber" fame, predict that **Africa will be a Mohammedan continent before many years have passed.**

Men may say, and men have said: "Why not let the negroes go over to Mohammedanism? It would surely be an upward step on the road of civilization." With this saying most of those who know Africa well will join issue: Mohammedanism is anti-Christian in its essence. It is an up-hill cul-de-sac for native races. Lands where Islam has been permitted to hold sway undisturbed for centuries—lands such as Tripoli, Persia, Palestine, Arabia, Asia Minor—show the abject failure of Moslem methods, and there is not a solitary Mohammedan country in modern days where we can trace any advance of civilization to the influences of that religion.

We have heard it said, and heard it often, that the African will take more easily to the Mohammedan faith than to the Christian. This also I would combat. Given a fair field and no favor, the Christian missionary need not fear the Moslem religious emissary. In Uganda Mohammedan traders and teachers preceded the Christian missionary Mackay. Yet today Christianity is paramount in that country.

The Christian religion—the religion of love—is the most natural religion for the child, and for the child races.

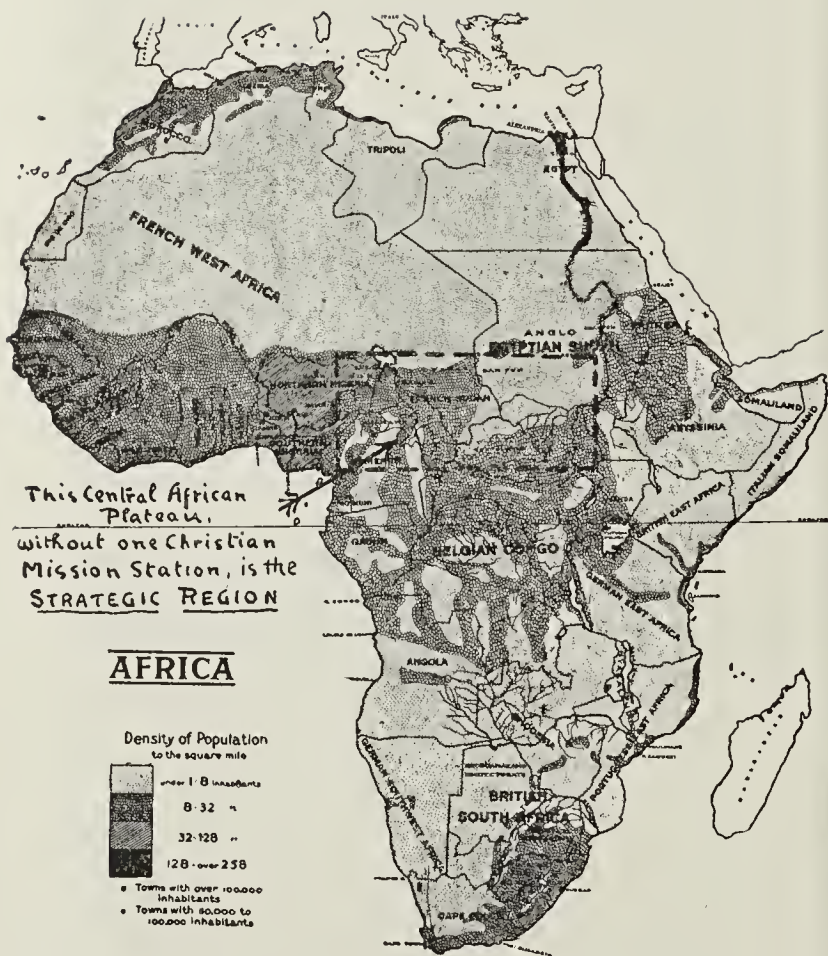
The natural wealth of Africa is beyond that of the other four continents. There is more gold in Africa, more tin, more copper, more iron; there are more diamonds, ostrich feathers and ivory than in the other four. The finest cotton in the world is grown in Egypt, and of all the most valuable products of our mother earth, Africa has a super-abundance. One has only to refer to the gold of Johannesburg (one-third of the world's output in gold comes from that place alone,) to the copper of the Katanga district, the diamonds of Kimberly, the tin of Bukuru. The whole backbone of Africa is an ironstone plateau, with considerable coal deposits embedded in it.

When, eighteen years old, Cecil Rhodes was laying his plans for the Cape-to-Cairo railway, Kitchener built his strategic line to Khartoum. Seven great arteries of trade and traffic, in the shape of railroads have been opened since then from different sides into the interior of this mighty Continent. You can go today, by rail and river steamer from the West coast to Timbuctoo. An up-to-date car will carry you inexpensively from Lagos to Kano. The Congo Rapids have been surmounted by a line running from the coast to Stanley Pool; another will take you through the most perfect game garden in the world, from Mombassa to Uganda. The German Government has built a new iron road to Lake Tanganyika. An English company is constructing another from Lobito Bay to the copper mountains near the sources of the Congo. Of the Cape-to-Cairo railway almost 4,000 miles have been finished, and the last 1,000, from El Obeid in Kor-

dorfan to Stanley Falls on the Congo, will make that stupendous plan of Cecil Rhodes a fait accompli. One needs to be no prophet to be able to say that the next ten years will probably see these great railway lines linked up in the interior of Africa, and we shall then be able to cross the "Dark Continent" from North to South, and from East to West.

Africa is the continent of the child-races, the richest of the five Continents, the Continent of the future and the destiny of her dark-skinned children will be decided during the next few years. Between a few Mission Stations, in the Upper Nile Valley and the furthest outposts of the Sudan United Mission in Northern Nigeria there remain 1,500 miles of mountain swamp and plateau land inhabited by some thirty-five important pagan tribes. Tribes that might be won for our Christian faith and thus form a new barrier against the religion of Mohammed.

"There is offered to the young men and women of the Twentieth Century no greater opportunity for noble service and superb heroism than the contest which is now on for pagan Africa."



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